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ABSTRACT

Characteristics of a cooperative inservice teacher education program that has functioned for three years are discussed in this booklet. Part I supplies the rationale behind the planning of the Teacher Corps-funded program between Western Washington University and the Arlington Public School District (Washington), including problems reported in research literature and criticisms of inservice programs voiced by elementary and secondary school teachers and by professors of education. A description of the functions of the policy board and site-specific building advisory councils outlines responsibilities to the university, school district, and community. In Part II, results of interviews with program participants are summarized. Twelve areas were addressed in the interviews: (1) impact on school instruction; (2) impact on school climate; (3) impact on personal relations; (4) personal benefits to participants; (5) effects on visiting consultants and faculty interns; (6) benefits to building advisory councils; (7) responsiveness and efficiency of delivery system; (8) incentives for teachers; (9) citizen involvement; (10) problems experienced with the program; (11) potential benefits of the program; and (12) potential benefits of a planned professional development center. An appendix lists major characteristics of the program, including governing bodies, use of consultant services, university faculty internships, and citizen involvement. (FG)

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THE WESTERN INSERVICE EDUCATION MODEL

A Description and Evaluation of the Teacher Corps Staff Development Project as Demonstrated by Western Washington University and Arlington School District, Arlington, Washington

BY

Herb Hite and Paul R. Walker
(Edited by Gerry Cox)

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Teacher Corps
Western Washington University
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PART 1

Rationale

Teacher education programs exist to assure that public school students meet a sufficient standard of learning.

1. Training of New Teachers.

Historically, universities have tried to respond to the needs of public school students by preparing new teachers for the classroom. For years, teacher candidates have acquired much the same knowledge and teaching skills, although there were innovations--sometimes new teachers gained new skills or acquired new information about teaching and learning.

But these innovations rarely affected classroom methods, for new teachers were usually co-opted by experienced teachers. Rather than influencing the ways the schools functioned, newcomers tended to be shaped by prevailing practices. Beginning teachers frequently were--and are--bitter about the differences between their preparation and what they found to be the practice when they got the job.

Schools and Colleges of Education could claim that their programs to prepare new teachers had some impact on schools during the period of 1945 to about 1973. On the average, teachers taught less than three years before leaving the profession. The annual waves of newly trained teachers could be seen as a major influence on schools. Since 1973, however, that has changed. By 1980, only about a third as many new teachers entered the school system as did in 1970-71. Most of the practicing teachers are career teachers. Relatively few teachers on the job in 1980 had less than eight years of experience.

Clearly, the training of new teachers today has little impact on the quality of teaching and learning in the public schools. For this reason, Schools and Colleges of Education are attaching increasing importance to programs that aim to improve instruction in the public schools by providing services to teachers on the job. These services are variously called inservice education, staff or professional training, or continuing education.

2. Inservice Education.

Inservice programs are based on the premise that experienced teachers have certain kinds of needs that can best be met by on-the-job training. Most obviously, such teachers need to keep up with knowledge in their fields. Perhaps more significantly, however, they need help to cope with the different kinds of students placed in their classrooms because of new laws or court decisions--because of rulings on desegregation, bilingual education, equal opportunity for women, and education for the handicapped, for example. These externally imposed changes have dramatically altered the circumstances of teaching, although colleges have not substantially changed the preparation of teachers.*

3. Existing Models of Inservice.

There are presently two kinds of on-the-job training:

(a) By school district administrators, who bring in specialists (often college faculty members) to inject information about new curriculum developments or newly perceived methods;

(b) By college faculty and administrators, who export courses to school sites or offer courses at night.

The assumption underlying the training is either that the teachers need remediation, or that teachers are eager to improve their salaries by earning more college credits or degrees.

4. Problems and Inadequacies.

Teachers have these criticisms of such inservice programs:

(a) Such programs are not relevant to specific problems they face in their classrooms;

(b) College professors are out of touch with what is actually going on in today's classrooms;

(c) Training is laid on: teachers have little to say about their own professional development;

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*Teacher Education Reports, 13 November 1980, p. 5, in review of "Inservice Education: Priority for the '80s," by Margo Johnson and published by National Council of States on Inservice Education.

(d) The amount and timing of training is inappropriate: teachers usually do not need to know that much about the subject, or do not learn much by attending workshops after a day of teaching;

(e) Incentives are not professional or not adequate: teachers often feel they are coerced to attend inservice classes whether or not these classes apply to their own needs; teachers will take courses for credit because credits translate into salary increases, but the classes may have little to do with professional enhancement.

Professors of education have their own criticisms of most inservice programs:

(a) Courses are often watered down to allow teachers to earn credits for less work than is required of campus students;

(b) School districts where inservice is provided lack library facilities;

(c) Such programs usually require professors to work extra hours and travel long distances without adequate renumeration;

(d) University tenure and promotion policies do not reward inservice teaching.

While inservice education is clearly increasing in importance, most existing inservice programs have proved for various reasons problematic or inadequate.

When Western Washington University and Arlington Public Schools began their professional development program, they tried specifically to address the questions that had caused most of the animosities in other programs--the question of the relations between reluctant college specialists, suspicious classroom teachers, and frustrated school administrators. What they came up with was a professional development program that would match the legitimate instruction needs of teachers to a flexible system for delivering expert assistance.

5. Features of the WWU/Arlington ISTE.

The Western Washington University/Arlington inservice program is shaped by two groups of people--a Policy Board and Building Advisory Council. The Policy Board makes policy decisions and consists of the superintendent of public schools, the Arlington Education Association president, the community council president, and the Dean of Education at WWU. The Policy Board appoints a Building Advisory Council in each building. The AEA president nominates teachers; the community council president nominates citizens. Each BAC reports to the building principal.

This administrative framework allows the WWU/Arlington program to be an inservice education program that is genuinely designed by the teachers themselves. The following features of this ISTE distinguish it from its predecessors and in some cases address directly problems encountered in other programs.

(a) Clients themselves define the problems to be addressed. Each BAC identifies needs within the building it represents.

(b) Clients themselves specify what kinds of services they want delivered. Each BAC has its own budget and independently creates a program and recommends consultants within the confines imposed by this budget.

(c) Both the school system and the University provide staff support to BACs. The coordinator for inservice education from the Arlington school district was a teacher who also served as an administrative intern. At WWU, a "program coordinator" administered the arrangements with professors and with other departments. Each worked half-time on the program.

(d) The university provides a flexible system of services--mini-courses, individual projects, three-credit courses, on-site research projects, non-credit professional development activities--rather than trying to fit teachers into a schedule of existing courses.

(e) The services are designed to resolve problems that exist in a particular school rather than, for instance, to remedy teachers' inadequacies. For this reason, the school ends up paying much of the teachers' tuitions.

(f) The program is cost effective in terms of the school district's and the university's resources.

(g) University faculty involved in the program gain experience that often leads them to adapt or modify their ideas about teaching. In this way, inservice education becomes a means to faculty renewal.

(h) The program not only encourages but requires cooperation among schools, the teachers' organization, the university, and the community, as each professional development activity must be signed off by representatives of the building principal, the AEA, and WWU.

PART II

Results for Two Years of Teacher-Designed ISTE at Arlington.

This inservice model was tested for two full academic years, 1979-80 and 1980-81. Eighty per cent of the teachers in Arlington participated. Because the programs were tailored to requests by the teachers, their responses provide the most suitable measure of the effectiveness of this model. Hite and Walker accordingly conducted a series of group interviews with the Policy Board, the Arlington Administrative Council, the Elementary, the Middle School, and the High School Building Advisory Councils, the Community Council, the Arlington Education Association, and the Western Washington University Faculty Interns.* Although some of the questions asked during these interviews naturally varied depending on the specific group, twelve general questions were asked of all the groups in order to determine how these participants perceived the costs and benefits of this program. The results can be summarized as follows:

1. Impact on the School Instruction Program.

   The Elementary BAC, Administrative Council, and Arlington Education Association were the most positive, responding that teachers were able to use in the classroom the skills they had just learned in subjects like creative writing, sports medicine, multi-cultural education, music, and career education. The Middle School and High School were also positive, but to a lesser extent, citing the advantage in getting the program (sports medicine) they wanted but regretting the lack of administrative approval for some activities they had started.

2. Impact on School Climate.

   All three Building Advisory Councils and the Administrative Council reported that teachers became more aware of school climate as a result of the inservice activity. Both faculty-student and parent-faculty relations improved.

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* An explanation of the "Faculty Intern" program appears in Appendix I, page 9, no. 6.

3. Impact on Personal Relationships.

Although one Middle School respondent said that personal relationships between the teachers and administrators worsened because of a lack of follow-through on some plans developed by the Building Advisory Council, nearly all the responses from other groups stressed the positive benefits of faculty working together.

4. Personal Benefits to Participants.

Responses from teachers were enthusiastic, centering on the satisfactions derived from personal growth, on the benefits of having consultants provide help for their specific needs, and of having services brought to Arlington rather that their having to go to Bellingham for night courses. All the teacher groups emphasized the importance of the credits they earned; most of the teachers benefited from learning more about the school and their potential roles.

5. Effects on Visiting Consultants and Faculty Interns.

(a) Visiting consultants became better prepared to address specific problems. How necessary this is was highlighted when an inservice short course was canceled because the Arlington committee and the visiting consultant could not agree on specifics. In contrast, one inservice program worked so well as a pilot test that the consultant plans to use it as the basis for his course elsewhere.

(b) Faculty interns reported that the timing of the internship is critical, with spring the worst time. It is important to prepare the school staff if the interns are to function effectively. Two benefits reported were that the faculty are able to update their experience with schools and earn credibility. Furthermore, faculty internships can generate sufficient credit hours to support the entire program.

6. Benefits to Building Advisory Councils.

Participation in the Building Advisory Council was a major element in assuring cooperation, for it insured that teachers had major decision rights, provided more valid needs assessments, generated teacher interest, and served a useful management function (though it became clear that some staff person must be designated to provide support services).

7. Responsiveness and Efficiency of Delivery System.

Because the system identified needs in terms of numbers of teachers, certain kinds of programs like secondary level content fields were not provided. Within these numerical constraints, the system worked well in delivering services directly related to specific needs. Indeed, the variety of services available--one-credit mini-courses, three-credit regular courses, independent projects--facilitated an efficient, problem-solving approach. The efficiency of the management system increased in the second year, due in part to the program coordinator at WWU and in part to the project team leader/administrator with high interest in providing support services.

8. Incentives for Teachers.

Although increased professional responsibility (as in directing the Building Advisory Council) as well as professional achievements (as in increased knowledge of elementary school P.E.) were real incentives, the most important for teachers unquestionably was the gain of university credit hours. The fact that the school district paid for 3 credits for each participant heightened the teachers' perception of the benefits of the program. As noted earlier, the teachers emphasized the importance of the credits they earned for their credentials or for salary increases.

9. Citizen Involvement.

Although citizens on each Building Advisory Council and the Administrative Council were informed and indirectly involved, their involvement did not have much effect. Citizen involvement on a significant level remains more a potential than an actual benefit.

10. Problems Experienced with the Program.

There were some problems with scheduling conflicts in the High School. In the Middle School, the Building Advisory Council became somewhat hostile when the administration did not always implement its recommendations. In addition, the Middle School inservice program did not function well after March, suggesting that fall and winter are the optimum times for the program. In this regard, program staff should provide much information early in the year and arrange for specific services to phase out well before May or June.

11. Potential Benefits of the Program.

The potential benefits can best be summarized by the phrase, "More of the same." That is, there can be more involvement with the community, more communication among the Building Advisory Councils and with the administration, and more information on meeting and following up school needs.

12. Potential Benefits of a Professional Development Center.

A Professional Development Center could increase the range of services provided not only in inservice education for teachers but also, with the addition of neighboring high schools, in content fields. By accommodating student teachers and visiting faculty from Western Washington University, the Center could be a demonstration project for school/university coordination and collaboration. It would be a model for teacher education and school-based research that is closely related to school practices and local needs. Its operation should stimulate Arlington faculty to improve professionally, especially given the presence of student teachers who tend to bring out the best in a teacher. Finally, such a center might make the Western Washington University/Arlington project a permanent arrangement that could exist independently of Federal funding.

APPENDIX A

TEACHER DESIGNED INSERVICE EDUCATION AT ARLINGTON

Western Washington University and Arlington Schools have worked together for three years on a unique staff development program. The program was possible through a Teacher Corps grant. The major characteristics of the plan are:

1. Policy Board makes policy decisions. The board consists of four people--the superintendent, the AEA president, the community council president, and the Dean of Education at WWU. The director and co-director of the Teacher Corps project carry out the board's decisions.

2. The Policy Board appoints a Building Advisory Council in each building. The AEA president nominates teachers; the community council president nominates citizens; each BAC reports to the building principal.

3. The BAC's organize the inservice program. The committees identify staff needs, specify the kinds of service to be delivered, and recommend consultants. Each BAC has a budget provided by Teacher Corps.

4. Each BAC is supported locally by the coordinator for inservice education. At the university, a program coordinator administers the arrangements with professors and various departments of WWU. Each spends about half time on this coordination.

5. Consultant services are funded by honoraria provided by Teacher Corps to the BAC's, or are made possible by enrollments in Educ. 594--Practice in Action Research. Services consist of mini-courses, individual projects, three-credit courses, or non-credit professional development activities. The nature of service is tailored to the requests made by BAC's. The school district pays for tuitions--three graduate credits in approved Educ. 594 projects. Each professional development activity is signed off by representatives of the building principal, the AEA, and WWU.

6. Two or three faculty from WWU carry out internships during each academic year. Each faculty intern visits the school throughout the year, working with teachers who share his/her special interests, visiting classes and teachers individually and planning a course to meet a defined need of teachers. The faculty intern offers the course usually in the spring. The faculty internship is an important part of the inservice program.

7. WWU Faculty (other than faculty interns) perform two kinds of services:

(a) The faculty member may be a specialist in a specific content area. Usually the faculty member plans with the prospective class members or their representative and presents a 10-contact hour minicourse, for a fee of $250.

(b) The faculty member may be the instructor of record for 594 j, k, m. In this role the faculty member is the instructional manager and is responsible for directing teachers in the application of the mini-course information in their classrooms.

8. Citizen involvement--Members of the Advisory Council on Education (the community council) represent the community on the Policy Board and on each Building Advisory Council. Some community members also take part in professional development activities.

9. The School of Education's goal is to establish a continuing Professional Development Center.

The Teacher Corps staff plan to extend the Arlington model to include neighboring school districts. The same model may be adapted at other sites in WWU's service area.